

Message Text

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44

ACTION EB-07

INFO OCT-01 ARA-06 ISO-00 CAB-02 CIAE-00 COME-00 DODE-00

DOTE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 FAA-00 PM-03 H-02 L-02 NSC-05

PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 /060 W

----- 071967

P R 021550Z MAR 75

FM AMEMBASSY BRASILIA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8432

INFO AMCONSUL RIO DE JANEIRO

AMCONSUL SAO PAULO

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE BRASILIA 2443

E. O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EAIR, BR

SUBJECT: PANAM CHANGE OF GAUGE

REFS: A. STATE 68757; B. BRASILIA 2152

1. SUMMARY: EMBASSY HAS DELIVERED NOTE REFTEL (A). HEAD OF TRANSPORTATION DIVISION REAFFIRMS AIR MINISTER'S DETERMINATION TO CLOSE CONGONHAS TO INTERNATIONAL FLIGHTS, FORESHADOWS NEGATIVE RESPONSE. END SUMMARY.

2. PURSUANT REFTEL (A), ON APRIL 1, ECON COUNSELOR PRESENTED NOTE ON PANAM CHANGE OF GAUGE PROBLEM TO AMBASSADOR PAULO CABRAL DE MELLO, HEAD OF FONOFF ECONOMIC DEPARTMENT.

3. DRAWING ON PARA 5 REFTEL (B), COUNSELOR SAID THAT ALTHOUGH GOB WAS MOVING TOWARD SOLUTION THROUGH CLOSURE OF CONGONHAS, USG REQUESTS THAT PANAM BE PERMITTED TO FLY INTO THAT AIRPORT UNTIL ALL INTERNATIONAL FLIGHTS ARE IN FACT TERMINATED. IN ADDITION TO THIS SPECIFIC REQUEST, HOWEVER, THERE WERE AT LEAST THREE CONSIDERATIONS WHY USG WAS PRESENTING THIS NOTE AT THIS TIME:

(A) THE TWO GOVERNMENTS APPARENTLY WERE NOT INTERPRETING LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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BILATERAL AIR AGREEMENT IN THE SAME WAY. WHILE CLOSURE OF

CONGONHAS TO INTERNATIONAL FLIGHTS WOULD ULTIMATELY REMOVE CHANGE OF GAUGE ISSUE, THESE POSSIBLE DIFFERENCES COULD SURFACE AGAIN IN CONNECTION WITH SOME OTHER OPERATIONAL ISSUE INVOLVING EITHER PANAM OR VARIG.

(B) IN THE PAST, GOB HAD REPEATEDLY CONSIDERED SHIFTING INTERNATIONAL FLIGHTS TO VIRACOPOS BUT ON EACH OCCASION BRAZILIAN CARRIERS HAD ADVANCED STRONG TECHNICAL, ECONOMIC, AND POLITICAL ARGUMENTS AGAINST THE MOVE. WHILE US RECOGNIZED THAT PRESENT DECISION WAS MADE AT A HIGH LEVEL AND INVOLVED BROAD SAFETY AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS, USG REMAINED GREATLY CONCERNED ABOUT POSSIBILITY THAT PRESENT SITUATION, WHICH US CONSIDERED AS CONTRARY TO AGREEMENT, COULD PERSIST FOR SOME TIME.

(C) IF FURTHER BILATERAL DISCUSSIONS WERE REQUIRED TO CLARIFY THE RESPECTIVE POSITIONS, USG WOULD PROBABLY WISH TO TAKE THAT OCCASION TO RAISE CERTAIN OTHER OUTSTANDING AVIATION ISSUES.

4. CABRAL DE MELLO SAID NOTE WAS "GOOD AND USEFUL" PRESENTATION OF US VIEW, AND THAT GOB WAS PREPARED TO HAVE BILATERAL CONSULTATION ON PROBLEM.

5. IN SUBSEQUENT MEETING, LATER THAT DAY, COUNSELOR HELICIO TAVERES PIRES, HEAD OF TRANSPORTATION DIVISION, RECONFIRMED THAT CONGONHAS WOULD BE CLOSED WITHIN NEXT THREE MONTHS. CRUZEIRO DO SUL AND OTHER BRAZILIAN CARRIERS, IN HIS VIEW, DID NOT HAVE THE POLITICAL POWER TO STOP CLOSURE. CONGONHAS AIRPORT PROBLEM WAS ONE OF THE MOST DIFFICULT ON AIR MINISTER'S DESK, BUT THERE WAS NO ALTERNATIVE, GIVEN THE RISK AND SAFETY CONDITIONS AT CONGONHAS. PIRES PROMISED RESPONSE WITHIN TWO-THREE WEEKS, WHICH HE FORESHADOWED TO BE NEGATIVE.
CRIMMINS

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